

I urge my colleagues to vote “no” on the previous question so that we will allow our Members to step up to the plate and offer these very, very thoughtful solutions or anything that our friends on the other side of the aisle might seek to offer as an amendment that would, in fact, allow this to happen.

I thank, again, my friend for yielding.

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Oregon (Mr. WU), the Chair of the Subcommittee on Research.

Mr. WU. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know how we got on the subject of gasoline prices because we're here to talk about SBIR and STTR. But if we want to talk about the price of gasoline, I think that the reason why we have \$4-a-gallon gasoline is because this administration got us into an unnecessary war in Iraq and that drove up the price of gasoline at least \$2 a gallon. So if you want to talk about gasoline, let's talk about the war in Iraq.

Now let's return to the subject of SBIR and STTR. The last time that we authorized either one of these problems, the SBIR program, was in the 106th Congress. The bill was marked up by the Small Business Committee and discharged by the Science Committee. I would note that the bill was not even referred to a subcommittee of the Science Committee. The bill then proceeded to the floor under a suspension of the rules. And we all know that as a suspension bill, there was absolutely no opportunity to offer an amendment to the underlying legislation.

Again, the last time that we authorized STTR, which was in the 107th Congress, the bill was marked up by the full Small Business Committee and discharged by both the Subcommittee on Environment, Technology, and Standards and by the full Science Committee without any Science Committee markup. The bill then proceeded to the floor under a suspension of the rules, and again there was absolutely no opportunity to amend the bill.

What do we have today? We have 17 amendments on the floor. We have 17 amendments made in order by the Rules Committee here on the floor.

Who's running an open process?

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. WU. I would be happy to yield.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. I appreciate the gentleman for yielding.

Two points: 415 Members of this House are denied an opportunity to offer an amendment because this is a structured rule, number one.

Number two, I would hope that my friend from Oregon would join me in voting to defeat the previous question because he has a view on why gas prices are high. If we have an open debate on that, he'll have his opportunity to make that argument and perhaps

offer legislation that would lower the price of gasoline. That is precisely what I'm going to be asking my colleagues to do in defeating the previous question so they'll have that opportunity. I hope the gentleman will join with me in that regard.

Mr. WU. Reclaiming my time, Mr. Speaker, with 17 amendments made in order under this structured rule, which I support, I think the gentleman and I will have plenty of time to share on the floor today.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. WU. I would be happy to yield.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

But my point is that when the gentleman was talking about the rising price of gas, he has an opinion as to why gasoline prices have risen. We haven't had a debate on this.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman from Oregon has expired.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 1 additional minute on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, I just simply want to say that we haven't had a debate, and this is an opportunity to debate this issue. And I hope the gentleman will join with me in voting to defeat the previous question so we can have his ideas on what would lower the price of gasoline, along with other ideas being debated.

That would not take away, would not take away at all, the ability to debate only those 17 amendments that you said were made in order. But the fact still remains 415 Members of this body do not have a chance to perfect this bill as they see fit.

Mr. WU. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. I am happy to yield to my friend.

Mr. WU. Seventeen amendments is obviously 17 times any one amendment to the SBIR bill. Now last time there were zero amendments; so it's infinitely better than what happened last time.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Reclaiming my time, Mr. Speaker, under suspension of the rules, there is generally agreement between both the minority and the majority. If the gentleman was upset then, he could have very easily have defeated the bill and brought it up under a special rule.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE).

Mr. FLAKE. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Seventeen amendments were ruled in order. But I can tell you one that wasn't: It was one that I offered. It would have been simple to do it. If we are going to make seventeen amendments in order, why not make this one?

I offered an amendment that would simply have prevented any funds appropriated to the Federal agencies that

must participate in these grant programs from being used for earmarks.

Now last week we had a bill called the Beach bill. It came under an open rule; so I couldn't be blocked from offering a similar amendment saying no funds authorized in this bill could be used for earmarks. I offered that amendment and it received overwhelming support. It passed by a 2-1 margin. I believe more than half of the Democrats voted for it and an overwhelming number of Republicans. Why wouldn't we allow that amendment to be offered here?

We have programs here, grant programs, and it's conceivable there could be 5,000 or 6,000 grants offered under this program. The temptation is going to be, as it is with all of the other accounts that we have earmarked in this place, to earmark it, for Members to simply set it aside and say I want this grant to go to one of my constituents or somebody else. And for those who say we haven't traditionally done that with this program, well, we didn't traditionally do it with the Homeland Security bill either. For the first 3 years that it came to the floor, some \$32 billion, none of it was earmarked. But last year about \$750 million was earmarked, more than 600 earmarks, nearly all of them air-dropped in at the last moment. So we have a habit around here of discovering a pot of money that can be earmarked for our own political purposes.

I know that the overwhelming majority of rank-and-file Members in this body don't want this to happen because it's typically those Members in a leadership position or a committee Chair position or some Member of seniority that typically benefits more than other Members. But I was denied that ability to bring that amendment to the floor today, and I would submit that the more we allow bills like this to come to the floor without amendments being offered like this, the more we're going to suffer.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman from Arizona has expired.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. I yield 1 additional minute to the gentleman.

Mr. FLAKE. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, as we allow authorization bills to come to the floor and we don't have a prohibition about the money being appropriated later from being earmarked, we are going to see them earmarked. That has been the trend around this place in recent years. That trend is not just continuing; it is accelerating, with the Homeland Security bill, as I mentioned.

So I would appeal to everyone to vote down this rule. Let's bring back a rule that allows a broader scope of amendments, ones that will actually preclude all of the grants authorized in this bill from being earmarked for political purposes.

And with that, I would urge a “no” vote on the rule.